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ABSTRACT

A study examined the changes created in Mexican education resulting from the North American Free Trade Agreement and the hundreds of foreign (mostly U.S.) manufacturing operations, or maquiladoras, benefitting from the agreement. Interview data from 100 Mexicans and 25 schools indicate that the maquiladoras provide jobs for people who had none, but do not provide enough income to move a family over the poverty line. The rapid population shift caused by the arrival of the maquiladoras taxed the Mexican government's ability to provide schools needed by the growing communities. Aside from infrastructure issues, curriculum decisions dominated by market economies have swung education's purpose toward maintaining a large work force and away from valuing all citizens' rights to quality education and their rights to question and change existing structures. As part of a World Bank-funded initiative focusing on technical education, Mexican secondary schools were required to eliminate general education courses and replace them with technology and accounting courses. These curricula, that are funded and partially written by businesses, do not teach students critical thinking or prepare them for college. Industries are not interested in Mexican children's knowledge of history, geography, civics, or natural sciences. Students who wish to advance their education must pay to take additional courses to prepare them for postsecondary education. Global trade systems have obstructed long-term progress in Latin America and robbed these countries of their ability to negotiate at the international level. (TD)

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EDUCATION IN A GLOBAL ERA:

EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF GLOBAL ECONOMIC EXCHANGES ON MEXICAN EDUCATION

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Teotitlán del Valle, in the Mexican state of Oxaca, has been a textile manufacturing village since before the Spanish colonization. Early fabrics made from the sacred *agave* plant provided clothing and religious garments. Oaxacans shifted to production with wool and other fibers after the coming of the Spaniards. Today, Oaxaca is world-famous for rugs and blankets. The children learn the weaving process through years of experience in the home, where each individual piece is created and produced on a traditional loom. One factory in Teotitlán del Valle is composed of a group of ten single women working in a cooperative. They live together and work together to help care for each other's children and maximize resources. They focus on preserving the traditional methods of making the dyes and treating the wools. The cooperative had been in place only a few months at the time of the research visit, and their profits at that point were minimal. However, they were able to meet basic needs and care for their children because of the communal support.

In contrast, textile factories for foreign countries are recent innovations in the neighboring state of Puebla. Young Mexican women have recently moved from their small villages to the larger city to work in these huge factories. They are sitting at sewing machines set in rows, sewing the same seams over and over on synthetic fabrics to make athletic clothing for people far removed from them in culture and distance. They have

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been trained in how to use the sewing machines in a local alternative school. They work away from home for long hours and depended on others to care for their children. They receive $4.50 per day. They exchange ancient cultural and family traditions for the demands of a factory serving a very distant and very different society.

In this global era, exchanges between economic superpowers and developing nations cause sweeping social changes. The exchanges are ongoing, dynamic, and large scale; and the impacts are often, purposefully or not, ignored. I attempt to examine a slice of the social impact of the economic exchanges from a view of Mexican education. Because Mexico is our close neighbor and the mother country for many U.S. citizens, we must be more sensitive to these impacts. Social scientists have this responsibility to examine and publish the impact of international exchange on the host country's society to provide more information for policy makers in both countries to consider as they create and implement treaties, legislations, and economic policy. It is particularly important for U.S. educators as we develop more understanding about local and global shifts in education.

Stromquist and Monkman (2000) report that general education in many countries is shifting to a design that better serves the technological needs of the market economies. These changes include the decreasing importance of fields such as the humanities that are less connected to the market; less emphasis on critical theory and thought and more emphasis on solving market-based problems; and market-based technology issues crowding out issues of equality and equity concerning women and minorities. Issues of access to education also mark global "infection" in a country as factory economies need more low skilled laborers and fewer highly educated people. The following provides

evidence from Mexican education of these educational shifts to serve the needs of the market economy as well as other impacts that foreign manufacturing programs have had on that country's education.

Introduction and Research Design

The research focuses on some of the changes created in Mexican education because of the intervention of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the hundreds of foreign (mostly U.S.) manufacturing operations, or maquiladoras, benefiting from the agreement. NAFTA was created in 1994 to grease the process of the international exchanges. It implemented restrictions on duty-free imports, lowered U.S. tariffs, standardized environmental regulations, and eliminated duties on all industrial products coming from the United States and Canada within ten years of its beginning. This aspect of globalization was designed to provide an economic advantage to businesses and industries involved in the interchanges. The governments of Mexico and other cooperating nations provide incentives, such as tax reductions or transportation infrastructure, to the businesses in hopes that their national economy will benefit (Mexico Connect Business, 2000).

I approached the research as a theoretical case study (Bassey, 1999). The intent was to describe the happenings and link them with theoretical ideas. Interview data (from approximately 100 Mexicans and 25 schools) were analyzed using the constant comparative process and aligned with many relevant documents and previous research to provide thematic insight into the major topics addressed. In a study this complex, I do not claim to present a linear, cause and effect explanation. The educational impacts that became evident in the research are examined at the intersection of several themes

including: international exchanges and philosophies associated with globalization, the specific international manufacturing programs, poverty and its roots, and the history of Mexican education. The following draws from a larger research in many Mexican communities exploring many of the impacts. This report focuses particularly on the poverty impact on education and the curricular changes.

My friendship with the Mexican educators and the opportunity to partially experience an educational setting in a maquiladora impact community led to a strong feeling of respect for Mexican educators who work in these communities. This respect, of course, flavors the entire investigation. This respect and my interest in the themes about globalization and education impacted the design of the research, and I believe any researcher must admit that their attitudes and interests are inherent in the research. We are not metal and machines and we are not researching metal and machines. Kemmis (1980) tells researchers that, as much as we would like to think otherwise, "...research is not merely the application of sophisticated techniques and procedures which yield up true statements as if we did not have to decide which techniques to use in which situations and how they must be modified to suit the particular conditions of the study" (p. 25). I recognize my humanness and my inescapable integration into the investigation. Because of this, I became observer-participant who will tell the following account of what I saw and what I learned.

Globalization's Role in Mexican Labor Economy

The overall impact of the maquiladora industry on Mexican education must be viewed with an understanding of the economic gain to the corporate offices. Economic and political interests have dominated globalization's efforts. Globalization benefits the

power businesses economically and politically. The U.S. businesses are often Fortune 500 businesses with healthy profits. One factory may employ 1,000-2,000 people, 80 per cent of whom are line workers. In the United States, each line worker's salary would be $10.00 per hour, often more (Cabral, 2001). In Mexico, the same work is accomplished for $4.50 - $6.00 per day. Also, fewer union regulations in Mexico often speed production output. This "efficiency" may come at the cost of workers' rights. Many of these factories are located in Mexico but closer to the large Texas and California markets, thus saving on transportation costs. These savings in wages, taxes, and transportation are a virtual treasure for the businesses.

It is the cost saving to the foreign business in these lower wages and reduced taxes that drives the Mexican maquiladora industry. This very driving force retards the advancement of economic and social conditions in Mexico. This puts Mexico in the position of accepting long-term consequences to take advantage of the short-term and minimal benefits of employment for just over one million of its citizens who work in foreign owned factories. The industry provides jobs for people who had none. However, the salaries are so low that extreme poverty conditions still abound. As in the example above of the textile workers in Puebla, for most maquiladora workers, the factory income is a lateral move on the poverty scale.

The majority of the jobs created by the maquiladora industry do not provide enough income to move a family over the poverty line. Over 80 per cent of the employees are minimum wage employees working on the assembly line. The other 20 per cent work as technicians, engineers, and administrators. These 130,000 Mexicans receive higher wages that provide a lifestyle similar to blue collar employees in the United States,

but far lower than wages of the U.S. engineers and administrators. The ratio of Mexican to U.S. manufacturing wages was about 10 to 1 and that number was down from the 1980 ratio of 10 to 2.5 (Gruben, 2001). Laborers usually earned less than $2,000 U.S. per year, and at best, they might earn $5,000. The minimum wages did not and still do not provide enough income to meet basic needs, and the cost of living in most areas in Mexico is not very different from that in the United States.

The comprehensive study, *Making the Invisible Visible: A Study of Maquila Workers in Mexico-2000* (Bloom, 2001), estimates that a family of four needs about 200 pesos (about $22.00) a day for a sustainable living. The study found that the majority takes home less than 56 pesos (less than $6.00) per day, just a fraction of what the family needs to meet basic needs. Arriola (2001) provides a view into the lives of maquiladora workers in the chemical plants near Acuña. "There is the emotional and visual impact of visiting a maquiladora worker in a home that may or may not have a toilet, that has walls and ceilings made of cardboard, wood and metal castoffs, as she tells you about co-workers nearly loosing fingers and hands to job accidents, spontaneous abortions and poor medical care, or just how she and her family are trying to eke out an existence on the insulting wages that typify the global economy's 'race to the bottom' " (p. 3).

Education Struggles in Poverty Communities

In this world of poverty, education faces tremendous struggles. I visited fifteen schools in the state of Chihuahua that were located in communities where the majority of the family providers were employees in maquiladoras. In many cases, there was no school when the community was newly forming, so the parents and teachers took action to build a school. They begged for donations and shared what they had to build shelters

out of packing pallets, tarpaper, and abandoned buses. These schools were functioning and were evident in the emergent communities on the outskirts of some of the large border communities during the 1990s, but the municipal governments slowly replaced them. Communities were prevented from building their own schools. They were left to wait for the city to provide the buildings. This ensured a safer environment for the students, but made access more difficult and some students could not attend school. This limited access to education is not solely caused by U.S. intervention via the factories, but the rapid population shift caused by the building of the factories added stress on the Mexican government's ability to provide schools as the communities needed them.

The poverty and struggle to keep up with the population shifts and social changes inherent in this move to foreign factory life impacted the schools greatly. Children were left on their own as parents worked the long shifts. With the limited community infrastructure, children were often in very unsafe conditions. Teachers sometimes took on the responsibility to provide for children's basic needs. Principals and teachers took on the additional burden of seeking external support to meet basic infrastructure needs. Beyond the impact of poverty on education, there is more evidence that Mexican education is infected by the spread of globalization.

Mexican Education Overview

Mexican public education is a little different from the educational model in the United States. There is a strong kindergarten program available to most people. The elementary program includes grades one through six. Usually there are two separate schools held at the same facility to maximize resources. One school meets in the morning and the second in the afternoon. The *secundaria* is similar to the U.S. junior high

program covering grades seven through nine. However, students have several choices of school types at this *secundaria* level. One provides an extension of the basic elementary education, and another, the *Secundaria Tecnica,* has a strong career focus where students receive a basic education and also must choose a training focus in one area such as secretary, auto mechanics, basic computer programs, electric technician, and seamstress. In rural areas there is a *telesecundaria* where students receive satellite programs in a distance learning type environment. The high school programs are also varied and provide preparation for university education or certification in a variety of areas similar to our community college certificates. The elementary program is provided free. Families must pay for secondary education.

The *National Program for Education 2001-2006* (Secretaria de Educación Publica, 2001) describes a vision of an integral education program for all Mexicans. Themes include educational equity and justice, understanding for a national identity, and the role of society in education. There is a strong and repeated focus in the document showing a concern about the inequities in Mexican education, and an affirmation that the inequities are worsening because of the recent economic changes. The plan describes a goal that by 2025 everyone in the country will receive a relevant education integral for the cultural, scientific, technological, economic and social development of Mexico. The plan also describes a desire for a strong technological education so that citizens can enter the workforce.

The plan calls for increased government spending with a goal of 8 per cent of the gross national product up from the 5.1 per cent spending in 1999. Funding for Mexican education has increased, but still not enough to meet basic needs such as enough

secundarias and high schools for children especially in the border communities. Families pay user fees in the elementary schools and these fees rise at the higher levels eliminating these educational options for many Mexicans.

Curriculum Changes in the Global Era

A society based on a market economy focus requires an education that replicates or enhances existing society and power structures. With this goal, the society may want a curriculum with only a narrow range of skills and abilities so the citizens are more passive and accepting of the status quo. More democratic societies desire that education provide its citizens with the ability to question and change the society. Curriculum in this society will be more complex with much more autonomy and critical thinking. Therefore, curriculum decisions take on god-like power to provide or deny information and opportunities to students in educational environments. These decisions determine who has access to the information that leads to the positions that control the power and thought of a country. Many countries maintain their tight elite power circles by placing little emphasis on education for the public and providing quality education through costly private schools that only the members of the power circles can access.

A democratic education values equal access to quality education for all the people and takes advantage of the diversity and understanding that all citizens contribute to the learning environment. However, in the global era dominated by market economies and production quotas, curriculum decisions swing education's purpose toward that of reproducing the social structure necessary to maintain a large work force and away from that of valuing all citizens' rights to quality education and their rights to question and change existing structures. Even in the countries that claim a democratic approach to

education, the curriculum is continually threatened by the competition for resources as the elite power circles struggle to maintain their dominance.

The following examines schools in Mexico caught in that struggle to narrow the curriculum to align with work force training versus providing a democratic education for all citizens.

Curriculum Examples

Two contrasting approaches to curriculum are described in the following. There is value in both of these approaches to learning. However, because each curriculum model impacts the society and the economy of the community in different ways, it is very important to examine the quantity of time and resources devoted to each curriculum style, perhaps to the exclusion of the other. We see these considerations as vital in all education systems, not just Mexico. They are particularly relevant, however, in Mexico as foreign businesses strongly influence the educational curricula.

The first approach is a democratic curriculum designed to inquire into society. James A. Beane (2002) describes classrooms where a democratic core curriculum had been implemented recently. Middle-school students gathered in small groups to discuss the questions they had generated related to two questions: What questions or concerns do you have about yourself? What questions or concerns do you have about the world? They examined self-selected and relevant topics from a personal and global perspective. These perspectives included the sources of money, distribution of wealth, current health issues and deadly diseases, environmental trends for the future, occupations, and conflict. Then they begin working to answer the questions using tools such as investigating family health histories, planning healthy lifestyles, examining accuracy of forecasts, visiting

local government sessions, making recommendations for community planning, making budgets, researching ancient practices, investigating other countries economies, preparing reports, presenting findings and debating findings.

Another example of the democratic curriculum comes from the Mexican high school in Ojinaga, the town where the Rio Conchas meets the Rio Bravo (we call it Rio Grande). Student teams traveled upstream to four communities on the Rio Conchas. They monitored and recorded water quality and water quantity. Then they located *ancianos* (senior citizens) in the four communities and interviewed them about the history of the river, the uses of the river, and the changes they had seen. They analyzed and reported the information, compared and contrasted the findings, and made presentations about their predictions for the future of the river.

An example of the second approach to curriculum, that designed to meet industry needs, comes from a program in Mexicali in the state of Baja California (Díaz Hermosillo, 2000). In 1999, the Economic Development Council of Mexicali and the community linkage committee of a local technical training school, Centro de Enseñanza Técnica y Superior, established a regional business development plan to address a lack of manufacturing and industrial engineers to meet the arrival of new manufacturing companies to Mexicali. The Centro was funded with national education funds through the General Directorate of Technological Industrial Education. Through the plan, the Centro created a Manufacturing Engineering degree, a Certificate in Industrial Engineering, and strengthened existing engineering programs. The Centro also designed a specialized course for plastic injection molding. As of 2000, there were 245 graduates who had received the training or used the courses for retraining and updating professional abilities.

The Centro also implemented training programs for persons working in an administrative capacity and a one-year program oriented toward norms of labor competitiveness and specific needs of industries. Centro de Enseñanza Técnica y Superior has been recognized by the local businesses for their quick response time and overall orientation to the industry needs.

In the state of Puebla, another interesting school – industry collaboration is occurring. During the 1990s, Secretary of Education's office implemented a series of secondary training schools called *Instituto de Capacitación para el Trabajo del Estado de Puebla (ICATEP).* There are 15 ICATEP schools in Puebla, and they exist in other states as well. The schools were designed to prepare people to work in the industries in the local community. One goal is to provide students who live in rural areas and indigenous communities with jobs that will keep them in the local area. Students select from a curriculum of courses in carpentry, secretary skills, sewing, automotive skills, and computer training. SEP provides funding for the teachers, facility, and some of the basic tools such as the twenty computer stations and auto mechanics tools along with a small budget for maintaining the machines. The rest of their budget comes from support from the community, and there is a requirement that ICATEP schools link with the local community for funding and support.

The school is near a small city surrounded by many small rural communities. There is a large U.S. owned clothing factory and a Bacardi Rum factory in the area. The clothing factory provided thirty sewing machines on loan and pays tuition fees for the students. In return, the students work for two hours per day at the factory while they are learning at the school. At the end of the one semester sewing class, the students had made

one complete garment. The local police provided fabric and the women in the sewing class made new police uniform shirts as their learning projects. The large Bacardi plant and AgricoNational Chemicals have also provided assistance for tuition. The owner of the clothing factory said that this program is very beneficial to his business. He can select the best students to fill his vacancies and the training time for three weeks[10].

In addition, the ICATEP schools provide community workshops that align with the community roots and culture. For example, this community, Izucar de Matamoros, has throughout history made clay sculptures called *arbol de vida* or trees of life. Small clay figures depicting Bible themes and nature are attached to the tree-shaped candelabra and painted bright colors and unique designs. There are traditions and histories that inform each sculpture. One of the local artists provides community workshops in this art so the tradition will live on in the community.

"We are people with heart and conviction to help the region," the school director told me. "This is an adult education program for anyone to prepare them for local jobs. Anyone who can read and write and is fifteen years or older can enter, even if they have not finished primary or middle school." She told us that most are young people from the rural communities looking for alternatives to the unpredictable and unprofitable agricultural jobs. They serve some of the poorest young folks in the state. Many of their students are young women, often abused. To begin the courses, they provide some counseling services and discuss topics such as dress, pregnancy, health, and common diseases.

The work preparation schools described above served an important short-term need. They provided jobs to people who needed jobs. But, what is the long-term cost they

must pay? First, Mexican public funds are diverted away from democratic educational needs into a program that is narrowly designed to meet the needs of a foreign business. Lost from view is education's role in improving the common good. Second, Mexicans abandon their traditional life styles and enter a temporary and artificial work/life style. Any opportunity to advance is almost non-existent. The only change in the daily grind that they may experience is termination when the foreign company shuts down or relocates. At best, some of the men (and a very few women) who graduate from the Centro de Enseñanza Técnica y Superior will be able to compete for the limited number of middle level technician jobs in the maquiladoras. U.S. citizens still dominate the higher level engineer and administrative jobs.

The ICATEP school director had such a heart for the community, and knew she was providing an opportunity to improvement for the women who entered her program in a land were opportunities are few. I found myself caught up in the congratulations of the short term benefit, but ached over the missing education about knowing and implementing democratic thinking and leadership…a far cry from sewing the same seam on the same cloth over and over again for one of the thousands of athletic wear stores in one of the thousands of malls in *Los Estados Unidos*.

School-to-Work Curriculum

Local community involvement is desirable in schools, but if most of these businesses are foreign, is this local? I witnessed productive friendships, respect, and alliances forming as the foreign business interacted with the local community. But allegiance remains with the home corporation, and factories have (and continue to) shut down over night with little thought for the host community. Still these relationships

between schools and foreign factories exist. In examining these relationships, it is very important that we identify the role of the factory in training its employees and the role of the public schools in educating its citizens for a successful future. There is evidence that these roles have commingled in Mexico.

In the Mexican border communities, the maquiladoras have a strong influence in the secondary and technical training schools. There are frequent contacts between the maquiladoras and the schools, and the schools are often located near the industrial zones. Maquiladora employees are teaching some of the technical classes in the secondary schools. This strong integration has been encouraged in hopes of providing a more efficient education system and a decrease in unemployment in the work force.

The maquiladora industry is basically an artificial economy subject to the economic trends of the parent country. In addition, the industries' biggest need is for minimum skill labor. The financial gain comes from the significant savings for minimum skills employment. Hualde (2001) administered a survey of electronics industries in Tijuana and Ciudad Juárez which revealed that the factories are looking for very few specially trained technicians or engineers. The majority of their employees (50-80 per cent) do not require any technical expertise. In addition, he found that most technician's jobs were not acquired from school / business links, but from the informal network of friends and contacts.

In the early 1990s, in Tijuana, a large Chinese aviation factory assisted in the creation of a school in Tijuana designed specifically to meet the needs of this one major industry. With the support of a powerful senator, Mexican funds and funds from Hong Kong were used to build a technical high school, *Centro de Bachillerato Técnico*

Industrial y de Servicios (CBTIS), with a curriculum designed specifically for the aviation industry's needs. During the first few years, most graduates of CBTIS stepped into technical positions at the maquiladora immediately after graduating. Then, with a down turn in the economy, the maquiladora scaled back production and many employees lost their jobs and new graduates were without options. The city went to a large expense to add other fields of study to the school to provide a larger range of employment options (Hualde, 2001).

There is cause for concern about the curriculum designed for technical employment in a foreign industry. All of the students in the community are presented the vision and the tools to enter a narrow range of careers requiring the technical skills. They may choose to continue their education, but the curriculum is designed for them to enter the local industry, and they may be deficient in important curricular concepts necessary for continuing their education in other fields. This requires additional funds and time to take the leveling courses.

One of the directors of a *secundaria* I visited said that the industries want children who can read and write well and who know mathematics well. They are not interested in the children's knowledge of history, geography, civics, or natural sciences. Calvo describes this narrowing of curriculum.

> Large industries … have to look at local education. They have offered employment to thousands of young people of both sexes leaving from public elementary or middle school, and with few possibilities to continue their studies given their socioeconomic conditions. Largely, the local schooling is taking on the function of preparing the young for ways to get

out of debt as workers in a maquiladora. This indicates a limited and partial vision existing in the educational community – this relation of education to work" (Calvo, 1992, p. 273).

A Democratic School's Struggle to Survive

In 1995, Mexico began an educational effort to provide a standard certification for many fields of labor focusing on technical education and work training called the Project for Modernization of Technical Education and Training (PMETYC). The project received funds from the World Bank. The stated purpose of this effort was to better prepare Mexican citizens to enter the world of work. "...that the employees have received a training that permits them to be more productive, to be more valuable for the businesses, and, for themselves, to receive a higher salary and more stable jobs" (SEP, 2000, p. 7). Buenfiel (2000) validates that this Mexican educational reform is influenced by the global brokers, World Bank and International Monetary Fund. She sites World Bank wording for educational reform and locates almost identical wording in the Mexican educational reform documents.

The program was based in competencies focusing on practical knowledge of work activities common to most occupations in Mexico. Modules and educational packets were developed. For the secondary schools, this resulted in a major curricular reform. The Secretary of Education required all high schools that did not already have technical and work training to implement these into their curricula. The specific changes were to eliminate general education courses and replace them with technology and accounting courses designed as preparation for work. An example of how that national program

change is impacting a school struggling to maintain its vision of a democratic curriculum is described below.

I explored a high school serving a large community on the outskirts of Ciudad Juárez. It is the only high school in the area and over half of the students come from homes where the parents are employed in the maquiladoras. I'll call the school Loma Linda High School, and the staff names are pseudonyms. It is one of the few public high schools designed to be funded with partial federal funds and partial fees from the students. However, at the time of the research, the school had received no government support for more two years, and all the budget, some $30,000, came from the fifty dollars per month each student paid. The fortunate students who found jobs working in a maquiladora or a restaurant in the afternoon could afford the tuition to attend. The majority of high-school age children in the community did not attend high school. Blanca Soto, the school's principal, explained that the school had made a minor curricular change (described below) that the government authorities did not approve, so their government funds were cut. The principal at Loma Linda was very much opposed to the curricular reform SEP was imposing in her school.

An understanding of the philosophy of the principal and teachers at Loma Linda may help clarify why the school opposes the curricular reform. Ms. Soto and a literature teacher, Rodolfo Casas, provided much of the information through several interviews. In addition, I was allowed to assist in the English classes and interview the students. Ms. Soto explained that when she became principal, the students had their restrooms and the staff had restrooms in the office building. This restroom was kept locked and only staff could access the key. Ms. Soto told me, " I decided to open these restrooms for everyone

in the school. Each person is equal and anyone can use the facilities without any distinction." The high school teachers are paid by the hours of classes they teach. Mexican teachers often compete for the extra hours and even second jobs to make their small salary stretch to meet their needs. One teacher left the school. The teachers' union, who has much control in hiring teachers, wanted to assign those extra hours to the teachers with most seniority. Ms. Soto called the faculty together and they generated their own plan. They decided that the hours would be distributed among the newer teachers who had fewer hours. Because the funds are so limited, it is difficulty to meet payroll. Ms. Soto told me that the teachers eventually received almost all the pay they earn, but it us usually very late. The principal called another meeting, this time including staff and faculty. They decided together how to distribute the payroll. They devised a level system. The first level included staff such as custodians who depended on the money to survive. The second level included the newer teachers who had less income. The older teachers with more hours agreed to receive their salary last because they had more to fall back on.

The Loma Linda staff had an open door policy in the office. On my visits I saw the students going in and out of the office area, chatting formally and informally with the administrators and staff. Ms. Soto told me that two years ago the students complained to her that they were taking ten classes a semester and this was too much. She met with some students and teachers and devised a bi-semester system where they would take five classes for ten weeks and five more for the next ten weeks. The teachers readily agreed because they were able to focus more on their students in the reduced class load. They implemented this change, and it was this change that was considered an unauthorized

curricular change by the school officials. Their government funds were cut. She said they went back to the ten-hour system the next year, but the funds were not reinstated.

It is the defense of a democratic curriculum that Ms. Soto and the faculty present that is most interesting and informative. At the time of my investigation in the school in the spring of 2003, the school provided a general curriculum for all students and one eighth of their courses were selected from a menu that would give them more specific preparation to enter a career or to enter a course of study in higher education. There were twelve of these options including pre medicine, physics, arts and literature, computer technology, and business courses. Starting in the fall of 2003, the school had to eliminate these twelve options and provide only the one option of the classes in computer technology and business accounting for all students. In Ciudad Juárez, the majority of jobs in any field of business are jobs in the foreign maquiladoras and most of those require minimum skills.

Ms. Soto expressed her frustration. "Who am I to tell a person that they should work in a factory or not. I want the students to be prepared to go to UACJ [Universidad Autonoma de Ciudad Juárez] or UTEP [University of Texas in El Paso, across the border] or to go to work as a technician if they want. We had courses that helped the students be critical thinkers about their society like the Socioeconomic Structure of Chihuahua [the Mexican state where Ciudad Juárez is located] and an art class that examined border cinema. This art is much more relevant than the art of Salvador Dali that is in the curriculum. We have to eliminate these classes and even our English language classes."

Recent professional development for the faculty has focused on these curricular changes and the implementation of a values curriculum. This values curriculum is funded and partially written by the local businesses and includes values of being a good employee such as being on time, working hard, and respecting the leader. Ms. Soto interprets this as more evidence that the government is forcing a change in Mexican education to one that prepares the majority of the citizens to work in the foreign factories. "All we can teach is reading, writing, math and business values. I think the students have the right to learn how to question and be against the government's ideas. This is more a democratic curriculum."

Conclusion

This has been an examination in only a small aspect of Mexican education in a global era. The illustrations raise concern that Mexican public education, in spite of the published broad and encompassing vision, is constricted. Some of this constriction can be attributed to Mexico's involvement in global interactions with the United States. Education must be examined carefully for its role as impetus for social mobility or a tool for the reproduction of social inequalities. The foundational analysis is the degree to which the educational system is linked to the economic systems or the degree to which it is linked to the social systems. To maintain an assembly-plant work force, the desirable state would be multitudes of people with minimal education to provide the minimal skill workers receiving the minimal wages.

Healthy democracies respect the individual's right to success while holding sacred the notion of public or common good. The notion of common good should not stop at a political border. A country entering, or dominating, a global market economy must be

more sensitive to its position in the global society. María Rosas (2001), social sciences professor at the Mexican National University in Mexico City, provides evidence that the global trade systems have obstructed progress in Latin America and robbed these countries of their ability to negotiate at the international level. Rosas states her position along this continuum. "The final purpose of the economic activity is not the submission of the society to the services of the market, but the opposite."

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